

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5-8, 10-12 and 14-23 are in this application and are presented for consideration. By this amendment, Applicant has amended claims 1-3, 5-8, 10 and 19. Claims 4 and 13 have been canceled. New dependent claims 22 and 23 have been added. Applicant wishes to bring to the Examiner's attention that the claims as now presented have been allowed in the corresponding European patent application as shown in the attached sheets.

Applicant has attached replacement sheets of drawings of Figure 3 and Figure 4c. Figure 3 has been amended to correctly identify the parts edge area 8 of the external sheet 2 and the edge area 9 of the internal sheet 1. Figure 4c has been amended to provide the edge area of the internal sheet 1 with the reference numeral "9". Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner enter Figure 3 and Figure 4c as now presented.

Claims 1-3, 8, and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

Applicant has amended the claims to address the lack of antecedent basis issues. It is Applicant's position that the claims as now presented fully comply with the requirements of the statute. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner remove the rejection in light of the changes to the claims.

Claims 19-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention.

Applicant has amended the claims paying close attention to the Examiner's remarks. Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the careful review of the claims. It is Applicant's

position that the claims as now presented are clear and fully comply with the requirements of the statute. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner remove the rejection in view of the claims as now presented.

Claims 1-14 and 16-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Zimmer (US 6,109,682).

The present invention relates to a device and a process for producing attached parts for a motor vehicle. The external sheet is folded inwards by up to ninety degrees and the fold 7 is connected at an angle by a laser beam 20 to the edge areas of the internal sheet. On the non-visible sides, the edges (8, 9) of the internal sheet and the external sheet extend essentially parallel to a component plane and are placed on top of one another and either laser-welded in the lap joint (see Figures 3, 4a) or laser-welded or soldered in the fillet 11. This allows the internal sheet and the external sheet to lie on top of one another in the area parallel to the component plane wherein the area parallel to the component plane is not visible by a user from the outside. This advantageously provides a free relative displacement of the two plates lying on top of one another before welding, which is significant in the present invention because it allows the exact setting of the joint gap regardless of manufacturing tolerances. The combination of different joining processes on the visible and non-visible sides of a component, especially a motor vehicle door, is not known from any of the cited prior art references. The present invention provides the advantage that on sides visible from the outside, the sheets can be positioned accurately and be joined with high reliability, wherein the joining point is removed far from the visible outer edge of the external sheet. On the non-visible sides, the

edges can be displaced correspondingly lying on top of one another for the compensation of tolerances and joined together.

Zimmer discloses a part of a motor vehicle door or hatch 23 that includes an outer sheet 1 with an edge strip 2 bent by approximately ninety degrees from a sheet plane 24 toward an inside 11 of the vehicle and an inner sheet 3 with an edge strip 4 having a section extending substantially in parallel to edge strip 2. The two edge strips 2 and 4 are positioned adjacent each other to form a connection area 25 and are connected through a laser beam weld 5 filling the gap between these two edge strips 2 and 4. The outer sheet 1 and inner sheet 3 are supported on each other in a supporting range 6 extending next to the edge strips 3 and/or 4. Edge strip 4 of inner sheet 3 is longer than edge strip 2 of outer sheet 1. The projecting section of edge strip 4 is bent from the plane 24 of the connection area back and into a direction orthogonally towards, or with respect to, the sheet metal plate plane and/or door plane 24. Thus it forms a holding bead 7 for a sealing 8. The sealing 8 over-grips and back-grips the holding bead 7 by a section 9. The sealing 8 is closely positioned at the outer side of edge strip 2, and includes a sealing lip 10 with an outside in flush alignment with the outside of the outer sheet 1. The sealing lip 10 seals a joint between motor vehicle door or hatch and a frame section 12. Edge strip 2 and/or 4 are each bent off from the outer sheet 1 and inner sheet 3, and the sheets are laid on each other as well as being restrained in support area 6 between a support 14 and a hold-down device 15. The hold-down device 15 can be moved orthogonally to the support 14. A clamping slide 18 is pushed in the direction of double arrow 17, which is in the sheet metal plate and/or door plane 24, to cause edge strip 2 of outer sheet 1 to be pressed against

edge strip 4 of inner sheet 3.

Zimmer fails to teach and fails to suggest the combination of welding an internal sheet and an external sheet together by a laser beam directed into a gap between the edge areas of the internal sheet and a bend of the external sheet wherein a hidden or not visible edge area is formed by laser-welding or laser-soldering the edge flange portion of the external sheet that lays on the edge flange portion of the internal sheet in parallel to a component plane. Zimmer discloses a motor vehicle door with an internal sheet and an external sheet, wherein the edge strips of the internal sheet and of the external sheet are bent and wherein the edge strips of these sheets laid one above the other are welded together by a laser beam directed into the gap between the two edge strips. The vertical bend of Zimmer at the entire circumference of the sheets with the smallest possible joining gap involves a sophisticated box-like stacking and positioning of the components to each other. This disadvantageously does not allow the gap of Zimmer to be minimized or maximized by shifting the inner sheet as featured in the present invention. Compared with Zimmer, a hidden or not visible edge area includes a flange portion of the external sheet lays on an edge flange portion of an internal sheet. This advantageously allows the sheets to be positioned accurately prior to the gap between the internal sheet and the external sheet being welded. According to the present invention, the edge flange portion of the external sheet is welded or soldered to the edge flange portion of the internal sheet. Zimmer fails to provide any teaching or suggestion for the combination of welding an edge flange portion of an internal sheet to an edge flange portion of an external sheet in a non-visible area as featured in the present invention. The Office Action takes the position that Column 1, lines

10-16 of Zimmer discloses a non-visible area that is joined as claimed. However, Column 1, lines 10-16 of Zimmer only discloses that an adhesive is applied to join an outer sheet and an inner sheet. There is no teaching or suggestion in Column 1, lines 10-16 of Zimmer for welding two sheets in a non-visible area as claimed. The Office Action further relies on Column 3, lines 6-33 of Zimmer to disclose joining two sheets in a non-visible area as claimed. However, Column 3, lines 6-33 of Zimmer merely discloses that a holding down device 15 and a clamping slide 18 are used to clamp the sheets together during welding. There is no teaching or suggestion in Column 3, lines 6-33 of Zimmer for welding the sheets in a non-visible area as claimed. As such, the prior art as a whole takes a completely different approach and fails to teach or suggest important features of the claimed combination. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider claims 1, 10 and 19 as now presented and all claims that respectively depend thereon.

Claims 7 and 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zimmer in view of Klaus et al. (EP 0200997).

Although Klaus et al. teaches a welded connection of two light-gauge sheets, the references as a whole fail to suggest the combination of features claimed. Specifically, Zimmer and Klaus et al. provide no suggestion or teaching for the combination of different joining processes on the visible and non-visible sides of a component. As such, the references together do not teach or suggest the combination of features claimed. One of ordinary skill in the art is presented with various concepts, but these concepts do not provide any direction as to combining the features claimed. All claims define over the prior art as a whole.

Applicant has added new dependent claims 22 and 23. New dependent claims 22 and 23 have been added to clarify that the internal sheet and external sheet can be moved with respect to one another prior to the gap being welded. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider new dependent claims 22 and 23.

Favorable consideration on the merits is requested.

Respectfully submitted
for Applicant,



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Attached: Two (2) Sheets of Replacement Drawings
Allowed claims from corresponding European Patent Application

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